

SEPTEMBER 25, 1980

The cool autumn nights have been a good trade for the heat wave that was baking the Shortgrass Country. Other than ice cream salesmen and school kids, I suspect that the rest of the citizens are mighty happy to be refreshed by the changed season.

Herders, however, don't respond much to eggs frying on the pavement and swimming pools boiling over at mid-day. Our goals seems to be removed from the elements. What we aim for is preservation of our collateral. Whether it is baked, dehydrated, or frozen is unimportant.

Actually, a hot dry summer is beneficial in some respects. Without any rain or grass, my crowd doesn't rush off into wild schemes like summering light yearlings or feeding out mutton lambs.

We need insurance against our own ideas. A paralyzing heat wave is good vaccine against mother cow fever and yearling ewe disease.

Bad weather isn't always around to protect us from our major weaknesses. I remember once when one of my partners got so mad at his banker for refusing him the money to buy some \$500 heifer calves that he up and changed banks. Along about Christmas of that year when his brand was just beginning to peel on those autumn beauties, his wife had to watch her soap operas in the kitchen to be able to hear them above all the moaning and crying that was going on around the house. Like he confessed later on, had he stayed with that flint-handed banker, he'd have saved a sack of coin. Last I heard he not only was back doing business at that bank, but was considering making it the trustee of his estate.

During the bad drouth of the '50s, San Angelo had an abundance of bankers that offered plenty of idea control. Every business day they'd sit behind their desks, turning back booted and hatted gents who were dead bent on out feeding and outspending a drouth that was hurting everything from the channels of the Panama Canal to the dog teams up north.

It was an awful time to be in a bank. Every sheep and cow herder in the country was cycling on 90 and 180 day turns through the jugs. Long lines of stiff oak chairs were placed for us to wait our times with the loan officers. I can recall old boys shaking like folks do down at the police station on a Monday morning. Others would develop the nervous stutters so bad they'd make the secretaries giggle behind their backs.

The most encouraging word any of us received was a conditional "no." The first five years of that drouth lasted 17 eons of time. I'd go to the bank just hoping and praying that a fire would break out in the basement to break the tone of the conversation.

But oh how sweet it was to leave town with your notes renewed and money committed to pay your feed bill and next year's lease. I'd feel so good on the way home that I'd wave at every car on the road. Drouths teach a man a little humility. Only thing is, they're the roughest school on this earth.

Yesterday was the last calendar day of summer. The citizens are stirring around more in the brisk air. However, I think frost is close enough to prevent any rash moves. That is, unless baldface calves become too big bargain for the long of hope and short of grass to resist.